

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1601
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INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE
NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 5336

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, OAS, NU, VE, GT, CS
SUBJECT: COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE ON NICARAGUA

1. VICE PRESIDENT VILLAGRAN KRAMER CALLED ME TO HIS HOME LATE THIS AFTERNOON (SEPT 8) TO BRIEF ME ON HIS IDEA OF SENDING A MISSION TO NICARAGUA CONSISTING OF FORMER PRESIDENTS OF GUATEMALA, COSTA RICA, SALVADOR AND HONDURAS TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH SOMOZA WITH A VIEW TO INDICING HIM TO AVAIL HIMSELF OF A THREE-MONTH LEAVE OF ABSENCE WHICH COULD THEN BE EXTENDED UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE NEW ELECTIONS IN NICARAGUA WHEN SOMOZA COULD RETURN FOR SYMBOLIC REASONS TO BE PRESENT AT THE ELECTIONS.

2. VILLAGRAN SAID THIS IDEA HAD ORIGINATED IN A MEETING HERE WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND
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OTHERS. HE SAID HE HAD PRESENTED THE IDEA TO PRESIDENT LUCAS WHO HAD NOT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO IT AS GOG POLICY BUT HAD AUTHORIZED THE VICE PRESIDENT TO EXPLORE IT. VILLAGRAN SAID HE HAS RAISED IT WITH COSTA RICAN FOREIGN MINISTER YESTERDAY WHO HAD UNDERTAKEN TO PRESENT THE IDEA TO PRESIDENT CARAZO. HE SAID HE HAD ALSO SPOKEN TO FRANCISCO DE SOLA, A PROMINENT SALVADORAN BUSINESSMAN WITH CLOSE TIES TO THE

GOVERNMENT, WHO HAD REACTED POSITIVELY AND WHO WAS TO RAISE IT WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO. HE SAID HE HAD NOT DISCUSSED IT YET WITH THE HONDURANS AS HE WASN'T SURE "WHICH MEMBER OF THE BOARD THERE" WAS THE RIGHT ONE TO TAKE IT UP WITH AND THOUGHT IN ANY CASE THAT THEY MIGHT WANT TO SEE FIRST WHAT REACTION THEY HAD FROM SALVADOR AND COSTA RICA. AS TO THE FORMER PRESIDENTS WHO MIGHT UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION, THE VICE PRESIDENT MENTIONED LAUGERUD OF GUATEMALA, MOLINA OF SALVADOR, LOPEZ ARELLANO OF HUNDURAS AND ODUBER OF COSTA RICA.

3. HE SAID IT WAS HIS IDEA THAT THE EX-PRESIENTS WOULD GO IN A BODY TO SEE SOMOZA, EXPLAIN TO HIM THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS PRESENTED TO ALL THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES BY THE ISTUATION IN NICARAGUA AS WELL AS THE GRAVE SECURITY RAMIFICATIONS AND TRY TO REACH AN UNDER- STANDING WITH SOMOZA BY WHICH HE WOULD AGREE TO TAKE AN INDEFINITE LEAVE OF ABSENCE, LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT IN THE HANDS OF A NON-CONTROVERSIAL DESIGNEE.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE OAS CONSIDERATION OF THE VENEZUELAN INITIATIVE, HE THOUGHT WHAT SHOULD COME OUT OF THOSE DELI- BERATIONS WAS AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH A FACT-FINDING BODY. VILLAGRAN MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT ATTACH MUCH IMPOR- TANCE TO THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM, VIEWING IT MAINLY AS A WAY OF ENGAGING THE OAS WHILE THE CRUCIAL EFFORTS
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WERE BEING PURSUED BY THE EX-PRESIDENTS. WHEN I MENTIONED OUR HOPE THAT THERE COULD BE A FURTHER WEEK'S DELAY BEYOND SEPTEMBER 12 IN THE OAS DEBATE ON THE VENEZUELAN REQUEST, THE VICE PRESIDENT SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE PROBLEM IN ARRANGING THAT AS HE FELT SURE VENEZUELA WOULD COOPERATE. HE SAID HE WAS ALSO IN TOUCH WITH THE VENEZUELANS ABOUT THE IDEAS ON NICARAGUA.

5. HE SAID THAT THE PRELIMINARY MEETING HERE WITH THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY LEADERS HAD FOCUSSED A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION ON THE SECURITY PROBLEM POSED FOR THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES BY THE FESTERING SITUATION IN NICARAGUA. THEY WERE CONCERNED, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THE POSSIBLITY THAT OPERATIONS SIMILAR TO THE HOSTAGE OPERATION IN NICARAGUA MIGHT BE CARRIED OUT HERE AND IN OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN CAPITALS AS A MEANS OF FORCING THESE GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE ACTION IN NICARAGUA.

6. VILLAGRAN ALSO GAVE ME A COPY OF THE LETTER HE HAD SENT TO PRESIDENT LUCAS SEPT 6 ASSESSING COURSES OF ACTION IN NICARAGUA AND THE RATIONALE THEREFOR. WE WILL PROVED ESSENTIAL POINTS FROM THIS MEMO IN SEPTTEL.

7. COMMENT: I SEE THAT MANY OF THE POINTS MENTIONED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT ARE ALSO REFLECTED IN THE BRIEFING PRESIDENT CARAZO AND FOREIGN MINISTER CALDERON GAVE AMBASSADOR WEISSMAN EARLIER TODAY. ONE DIFFERENCE IS THAT VILLAGRAN TOLD ME THAT CALDERON HAD AGREED TO CONVEY TO HIS PRESIDENT THE IDEA OF USING EX-PRESIDENTS AS EMISSARIES WHILE I GATHER THAT CALERON REPORTS THAT ANOTHER VARIATION HAS IN FACT BEEN ACCEPTED WHEREBY EACH COUNTRY WILL DECIDE FOR ITSELF WHO SHOULD BE USED.

8. IT IS ALSO WORTH EMPHASIZING THAT VILLAGRAN HAS LONG FAVORED COLLECTIVE ACTION ON NICARAGUA AND, IN CONTRAST TO PRESIDENT LUCAS WHO TENDS TO BE CONSERVATIVE
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IF NOT SLIGHTLY AMBIVALENT IN HIS APPROACH TOWARD SOMOZA, MAKES NO BONES ABOUT HIS ACTIVE DESIRE TO SEE THE END OF THE SOMOZA REGIME.
BOSTER

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NNN

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